

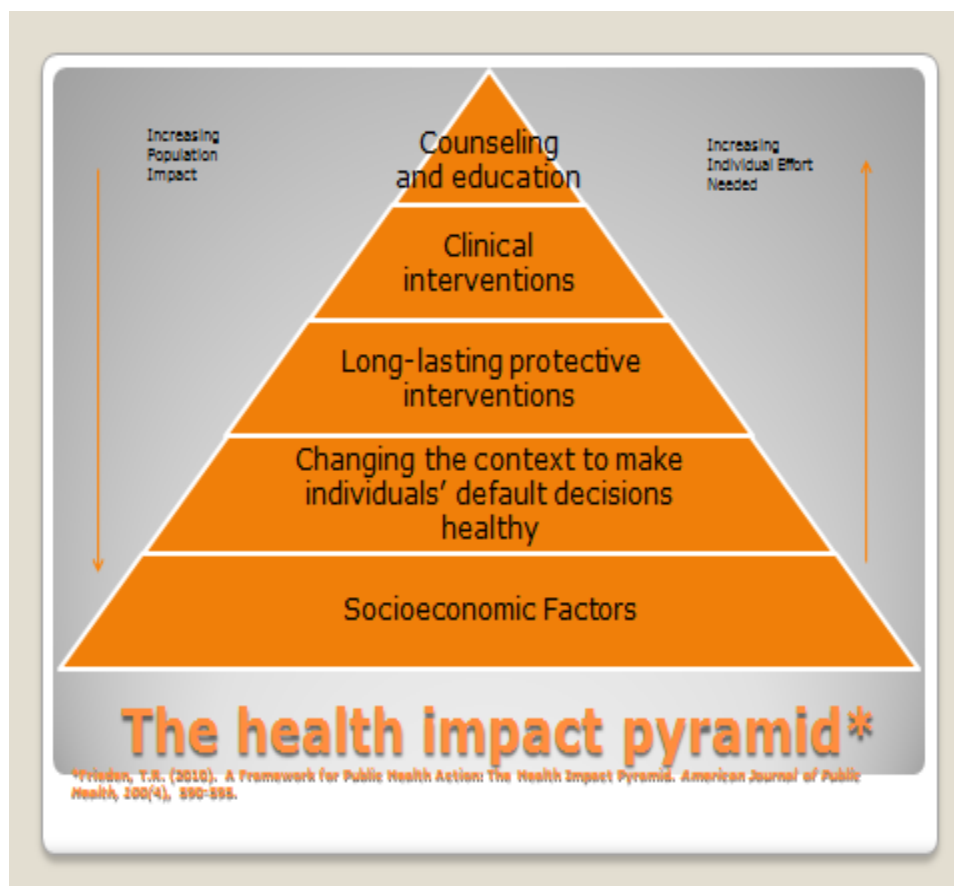


Questions to Consider in Identifying Priority Health Issues

1. **Effect on a large proportion of Iowans:** How big is the problem? The overall burden of the problem can be measured in such terms as the number or rates of injuries, deaths, and cases in Iowa.
2. **High morbidity/mortality/disability/pain/suffering:** Does the issue have serious health consequences, such as high morbidity or mortality, severe disability, or significant pain and suffering?
3. **Feasibility/cost effectiveness/timeliness of the interventions:** What are the costs and the likelihood of producing results? The purpose of analyzing cost-effectiveness is to examine the trade-offs or “opportunity costs” of making various choices. Which programs have the greatest pay-offs or gains? If, for example, resources are spent on one program instead of another program that would create a higher benefit, the opportunity for greater gains in health is lost. What is the time frame for assessing impact?
4. **Unfavorable comparison with other states/benchmarks:** How does Iowa rank with other states? Have there been any changes?
5. **Disparities/ health inequities:** Are disparate populations groups (e.g., minority, ethnic, rural) considered? Focus needs to be placed on groups with worse health status than the general population.
6. **Preventability/reducible burden/ability to affect change:** What can be done to prevent or reduce its impact? This estimate is based on the best available evidence or the degree to which the overall burden can be prevented.
7. **Emerging trend or trend in the wrong direction:** Is the issue a new one that is expected to accelerate, or, over time, has the problem increased?
8. **Social determinants/root causes/effect on multiple issues:** Are social, physical, and economic environments and conditions, collectively referred to as social determinants of health, considered? And what are they?



9. **Health impact:** What types of interventions have the greatest impact for improving health? A framework for public health action can be depicted by a five-tier pyramid. At the base with the greatest impact are efforts to address socioeconomic determinants of health. In ascending order are interventions that change the context to make individuals' default decisions healthy, clinical interventions that confer long-term protections, ongoing direct clinical care, and health education and counseling. Interventions focusing on lower levels of the pyramid tend to be more effective because they reach broader segments of society and require less individual effort. Implementing interventions at each of the levels can achieve maximum possible sustained public benefit.¹



¹ Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH. A Framework for Public Health Action: The Health Impact Pyramid. Am J. Public Health. 2010; 100: pp. 590-595.